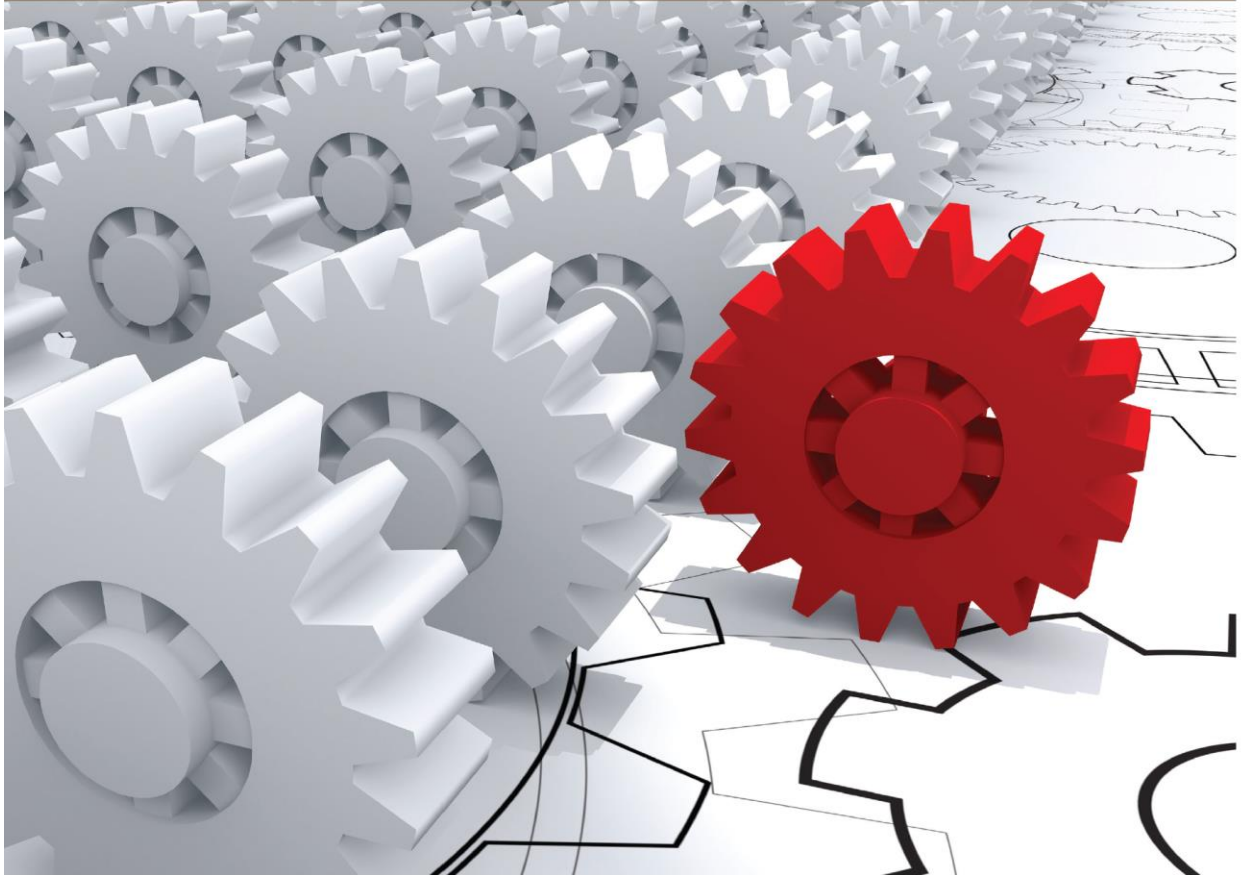


Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The importance of capable leadership is difficult to overstate. Relative to education, Kenneth Leithwood (2004) notes, "...there are virtually no documented instances of troubled schools being turned around without intervention by a powerful leader. Many other factors may contribute to such turnarounds, but leadership is the catalyst." In light of the reality that a typical principal cohort in Missouri will lose nearly 70% of its members within five years, the following statement takes on additional importance, "While highly effective principals create significant change each year, it takes an average of five years to put a mobilizing vision in place, improve teaching staff, and fully implement policies and practices that positively impact the school's performance." (Churn: The High Cost of Principal Turnover, 2014)

"In developing effective school leaders, we can recognize the value of experience and let trial and error serve as the lead instructor, or we can be more intentional. Through the implementation of the Missouri Leadership Development System, we choose to cultivate improved leadership practice by engaging our principals in relevant and meaningful learning over the course of their entire career"

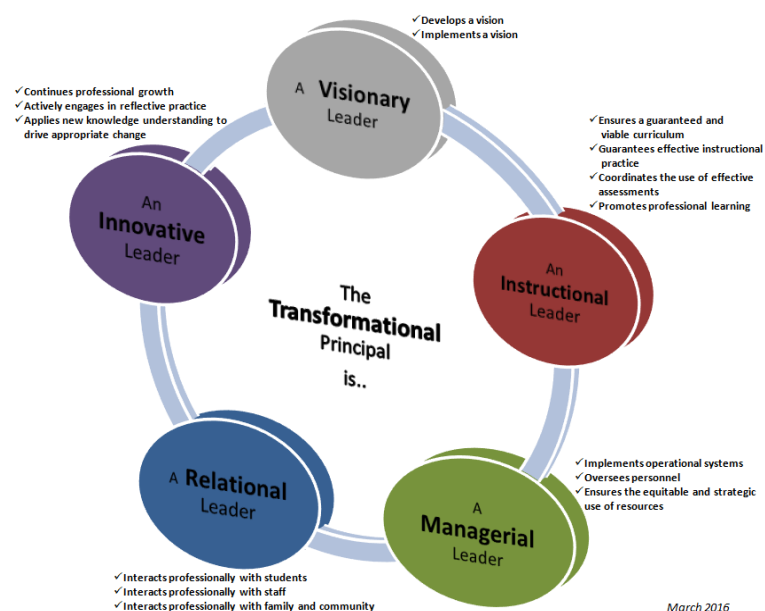
Dr. Margie Vandeven, Commissioner, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

The Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS)

The purpose of the Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS) is to develop and support effective school leaders. In 2014, key stakeholders, currently engaged in principal development and support, were convened by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to identify the essential competencies of a transformational principal. These identified competencies were categorized in five domains.

The domains summarize the main roles a principal must assume, often times simultaneously, to effectively lead a school that is focused on teaching and learning.

The MLDS continuum fosters development of leadership competencies in a comprehensive and progressive sequence (Aspiring, Emerging, Developing, and Transformational). Each level represents advancement in leadership growth across a



principal's career beginning with pre-service preparation.

EXAMPLE:

| Leadership Competency #6 —Observes classroom instruction and provides meaningful and timely feedback on teacher practice and student response. (PSEL2b; 4b,d;6a,e,f;10c,e,f) | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Understands and engages in meaningful feedback related to effective teacher practice | Observes classroom instruction and provides meaningful and timely feedback to build teacher practice and student response | Observes classroom instruction and provides meaningful and timely feedback to intentionally meet individual teacher strengths and areas for growth | Develops a systemic process for the continuous improvement of all teachers' instructional practice |

Each leadership competency has been cross-walked with the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) Individual competencies are not addressed separately or in a specified sequence, but are embedded in distinct Learning Experiences across the five identified domains. A description of Emerging Level Learning Experience 1 is noted below.

Emerging Level 1: Critical Firsts

In **Critical Firsts**, administrators examine effective practices, tools and protocols for designing successful first opportunities typical of the opening of a new school year. In addition, they develop an awareness of the large and persistent effects of first impressions, identify key windows of opportunity for building positive momentum, and learn practical and timely strategies for creating successful and future shaping initial school experiences.

MLDS LEARNING EXPERIENCES (LE)

Each Learning Experience is divided into specific “Treatments” that engage participants in activities and approaches designed to foster mastery of the related competencies. The Emerging, Developing, and Transformational Levels include twelve learning experiences that are divided into a total of eighty-one embedded treatments. Participating principals engage in the learning experiences at individual, district cohort, regional, or state levels.

- LE 1: Critical Firsts – Building positive momentum by succeeding at key initial leadership tasks and opportunities.
- LE 2: Recognizing and Developing Excellent Instruction – Cultivating strong instructional practices and developing an emphasis on skillful teaching through observation and feedback.
- LE 3: Understanding Self and Others – Understanding how self-knowledge and a customer focus creates success for all stakeholders.
- LE 4: A Primer on Decision Making – Getting things done, empowering others, and making the right call on tough issues.
- LE 5: Reading and Shaping School Culture – How to see and shape the invisible but powerful forces that fuel or freeze a school's improvement efforts.

- LE 6: Making Time for Instructional Leadership – Managing the management so principals do the instructional work necessary to move teaching practice forward.
- LE 7: Designing and Leading Change – Recognizing the art and science of patterns, connections, and relationships that make navigating and sustaining productive change possible.
- LE 8: Communication and Influencing Skills – Building better communicators through understanding the complexities of public and personal communication.
- LE 9: Human Resource Leadership: Optimizing personnel performance through the processes of recruitment, selection, development, and retention.
- LE 10: Principles of Servant Leadership – Responding to Robert Greenleaf’s inquiry, “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more likely themselves to serve others?”
- LE 11: Principles of Systems Leadership – Developing systematic processes for anticipating and planning for the future in a landscape of accountability, effect size, and numerous dilemmas.
- LE 12: Principles of Personal and Professional Sustainability – Understanding how aspects of professional effectiveness extend into other life dimensions enables leaders to thrive in an environment of constant challenge and steep learning curves.

The framework of the MLDS is firmly established. During the 2016-17 school year, nine regionally located leadership development specialists engaged 150 principals in the MLDS learning. As the 2017 – 18 school year drew to a close, over 1000 Missouri principals were engaged in MLDS learning opportunities. Continued development of the System will include:

- Building on the 35 year legacy of Missouri’s Leadership Academy to sustain leadership learning that remains philosophically sound, fundamentally grounded, and practically relevant.
- Transformational Level content design and publication, completed in March 2019, adds three additional Learning Experiences and twenty-one Treatments to a robust sequence of professional learning. This step on the MLDS continuum offers true “next level” leadership capacity building.
- Aspiring Level – Beginning in October 2019, under the leadership of the Missouri Professors of Education Administration (MPEA), Twenty-three administrative preparation programs will have the opportunity and training to incorporate MLDS content into their degree programs through the instruction available in four Learning Experiences and fourteen Treatments designed to introduce aspiring principals to MLDS knowledge, skills and dispositions.
- In its current iteration, the MLDS is comprised of twelve Learning Experiences encompassing ninety-five Treatments

- Responding to the question, “How do you know this is working?”, it is expected that the effect of the MLDS learning will, in time, be reflected in student achievement outcomes, teacher and principal mobility/retention rates, association membership, and sustained participation in the MLDS. As noted in the Early Evidence of Impact section of this summary, green shoots of productive outcomes appear to be emerging
- Maintaining productive working relationships with statewide professional associations and policy makers remains critical to MLDS and student success
 - MAESP, MASSP, MASA, RPDC personnel, MPEA, DESE, and national consultants are at the table guiding the advancement of this vital work.
- Anchoring the language and content of the MLDS within state standards, degree preparation programs, and certification requirements.
- Expanding, training, and supporting the Leadership Development Specialist (LDS) team to accommodate increasing participation and support for principals serving challenging school and community contexts. Three more specialists were added in the Fall of 2019, bringing the team to a total of thirteen school experienced and trained facilitators in support of over 1,100 principals statewide.
- Securing sustainable resources to support MLDS implementation.
 - Financial resources, available under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), have allowed DESE to initiate this comprehensive system of leadership development and support, however, current funding levels it will not be sufficient to address full scale implementation. Securing additional revenue streams, to meet and sustain the growing demand for MLDS learning, will be an ongoing challenge.

EARLY EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

While it is too soon to accurately determine the specific impact of MLDS learning on faculty/staff, and ultimately, student outcomes, clear evidence of the positive influence of MLDS participation is emerging. In just its third year of implementation, over 1000 (45%) Missouri principals regularly engage in MLDS learning. With 264 (47%) school districts represented in that number, the notion of cultivating leadership capacity, at scale, is more than aspirational. Further, the effect on principal retention rates is notable. National retention rates nearly mirror Missouri where, across all levels of the principalship, approximately 77% of first year principals return for a second year. After three years, 51% of Missouri’s principals leave their position. By year five, just 30% of that first year cohort remains. In strong contrast to those realities, principals engaged in the MLDS Emerging and Developing Levels (Years 1-3), Spring 2019 data indicates 98.5% have moved into their second or third year as a building leader.

Program evaluation, completed in mid-2019 by REL Central (Marzano Research), indicates small, yet positive differences in teacher and principal retention when comparing MLDS participating principals with their non-participating peers. Additional system analysis, conducted by the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) confirms that MLDS components are important for strengthening principal leadership practice and improves student learning.

Speaking to the benefit and value of MLDS participation, the report notes that principals and superintendents agree that MLDS supports the growth of principals, promotes collaboration, and strengthens principal instructional practice while providing a customized support to address principals' specific needs.

While it is not reasonable to celebrate causal influences, productive indicators are cause for continued in-depth explorations of the relationship between MLDS engagement and productive school effects. As powerfully as this data suggests the potential for a variety of positive outcomes, it is not surprising. The MLDS addresses three aspects of principal retention that research and experience emphasize as critical: Ongoing professional development, meaningful network opportunities, and individual support that extends beyond the first two years.

Just as the degree of a child's educational success should not be a product of zip code, neither should the likelihood that a capable and effective principal serves in any given Missouri school. Equitable access to meaningful educational opportunity requires effective leadership. The MLDS serves as a blueprint for developing and supporting transformational school principals. Through the collaboration of multiple stakeholders, the aim of putting a capable leader in every building across Missouri shifts from wishful thinking to purposeful action wherein effective leadership is achieved by design.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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